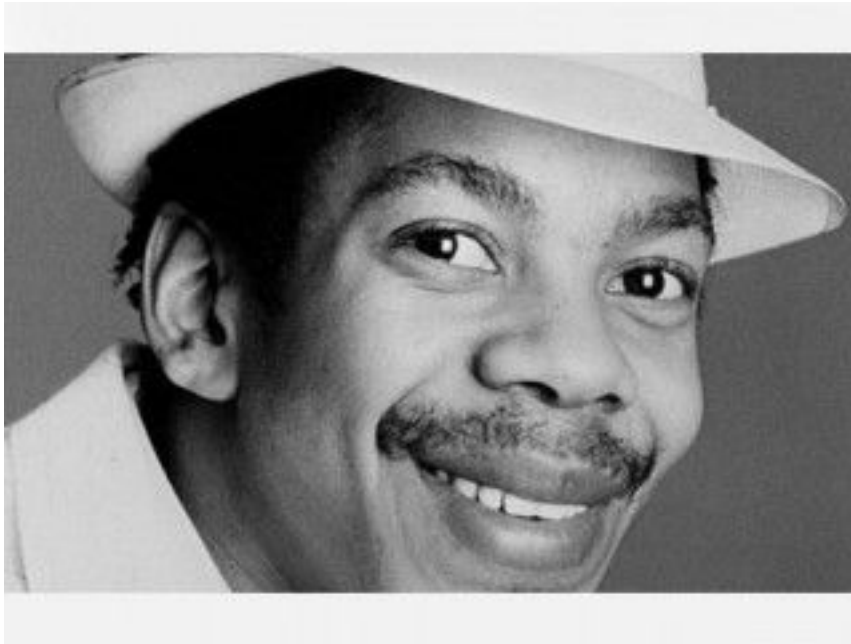


## ***Smiley Culture: Sad end for reggae's Cheeky Chappie***

**A report on the manufactured controversy surrounding the death of the British reggae artist Smiley Culture, (David Emmanuel).**



**Earlier this week, Marianne Elliot-Said (former punk rock star Poly Styrene) died aged only fifty-three. Two bigger names in British music – singer-songwriter Gerry Rafferty and influential guitarist Gary Moore – have also been taken from us this year. All three died from natural causes, but sadly, another, lesser known figure, died by his own hand.**

**The reggae artist David Emmanuel was born in South London in 1963. Although black, the man who would become Smiley Culture had more in common with Del Boy Trotter of the classic *Only Fools And Horses* TV series than with Bob Marley. Or perhaps a real life comparison would be more fitting, because like the comedian and sometime songwriter [Max Miller](#), Smiley Culture was a cheeky chappie, although unlike Miller, Smiley never relied on smut and innuendo to titillate his audience.**

His rise to fame was quick but not meteoric, and although it was also brief, he did not fall from grace, merely faded into the background.

In 1984, Smiley Culture [released two singles](#) which would define him for the rest of his life. *Cockney Translation* was a humorous ditty which paralleled Cockney dialect with reggae patois, while the follow up, *Police Officer*, told the somewhat improbable tale of how he was stopped for [driving while black](#) but escaped a bust for possession of ganja by giving a star struck traffic cop his autograph.

Although his two 1986 albums enjoyed some success, and he appeared occasionally on TV including as a presenter, he more or less faded from sight until his arrest last year. On September 28, he appeared at Croydon Magistrates' Court charged with conspiracy to supply cocaine, a conviction for which would have brought him a heavy sentence.

His trial was due to start on March 21, but on March 15 four detectives called at his Warlingham home for some as yet unspecified reason, and to their obvious shock and horror, after being allowed to visit the kitchen ostensibly to make tea, he picked up a knife and stabbed himself through the heart. The cause of death was confirmed by the autopsy.

Three days later, a press conference was held at Brixton at which Smiley's nephew Merlin Emmanuel spoke eloquently and passionately about his uncle's death, and called for restraint as well as a full investigation.

Last week, the Trotskyite newspaper *Socialist Worker* reported on a big demonstration held in London on Saturday, April 16, which blamed his death on "police violence and racism". Protesters who marched on New Scotland Yard called for an inquiry into what they referred to as a death in police custody, which technically it was, but there has never been any real suggestion of foul play, and to compare Smiley's death with that of Jean Charles de Menezes is little short of ludicrous.

**Yesterday, the *Sun* newspaper reported that one of the arresting officers had actually witnessed Smiley's suicide.**

**Although the (so-called) Independent Police Complaints Commission has yet to report fully on this tragic incident, on March 24, IPCC Commissioner Mike Franklin condemned the "anonymous sources" that were quoted in the press within hours as "incredibly insensitive", adding that these sources were not from the IPCC.**

**The police were present at the start of Smiley Culture's career; it is sad that they were also there at the end of his tragically shortened life.**

**Smiley Culture (David Emmanuel), reggae artist, DJ, was born February 10, 1963, died March 15, 2011; he is survived by his mother, son, daughter, and four siblings.**

**[The above obituary was [first published](#) April 27, 2011.]**